DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 799 CS 203 303

AUTHOR Kleinjans, Edith K.
TITLE The Art of Practical Curriculum Making: HEP-Secondary Language Skills.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Reading Association Far West Regional Conference (4th, Honolulu, July 29-31, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Composition (Literary); Composition Skills (Literary); *Curriculum Development; *Language Skills; *Language Usage; Program Descriptions; Rhetoric; Secondary Education; *Teaching Methods; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Hawaii English Program

ABSTRACT

This document describes the development of the language skills subprogram of the Hawaii English Program--Secondary. After considering various theories of instructional strategies in language, the team developed a pair of complementary subprograms: a part-to-whole skills lab for building up students' stocks of language options and a whole-to-part skills workshop for developing their sense of how to use the options in languaging with an aim. The skills lab concentrates on the phonological/graphological, semantic, and logical aspects of language usage and includes the following units: coding 1 and 2, word craft 1 and 2, sentence craft 1 and 2, passage craft 1 and 2, the reader's collection and study guides, and library skills and study skills. The skills workshops integrate these elements and add the rhetorical (or pragmatic) aspects of language usage, in six units: drama, poetry, games, broadcasting, newswriting, and courtroom. Several of these units are described. (LL)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED137799

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Edith K. Kleinjans

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE ART OF PRACTICAL CURRICULUM MAKING: HEP-SECONDARY LANGUAGE SKILLS*

Edith K. Kleinjans

How do you make a language skills curriculum?

Well, you start with a flow chart designed by an expert--your boss--which outlines very systematically and very rationally a process which begins with research and theory building, then moves on to design and development, and finally to testing, evaluation, and revision, with periodic cycling back to make sure you're on the right track.

Actually, curriculum making turns out to be more like the composing process as described by a British playwright named Tom Stoppard. Here's what he told Time magazine a couple of years ago about the way he writes:

> I half commit myself to some distant future date. I often talk to someone about it and suggest that in six months it will be done, so I set up a kind of deadline. But most of the intervening period disappears in a kind of anxious state of walking about. You cannot start until you know what you want to do, and you do not know what you want to do until you start. That is catch-23. Panic breaks that circle. Finally a certain force in the accumulated material begins to form a pattern. Most people think that you build a skeleton and then you know whether you are going to write a dog, a giraffe or whatever. What happens, in fact, is that you do a perfect little finger, and then you do four others, and then you write a wrist. You begin to get a sense of what kind of animal it might be.
>
> (Time, May 6, 1974)

I love Mr. Stoppard! He would understand curriculum development--and me! He would empathize with my anxieties over doing the research and writing

*HEP is the Hawaii English Program. It has subprograms in literature and language systems in addition to the skills subprogram described here.

CS 203 303

it up, my nightmares about shaping a design and making specifications, my depression over flags run up the flagpole--and not saluted! He would understand that binder full of rejected idea papers that I call the MSP book--ostensibly for "Most Significant Papers" but actually for quite something else. Mr. Stoppard knows that the creative process is a kind of comedy of errors--a flight, as they say, by the seat of your pants.

But let me back up. Our project started out to do something about unsuccessful learners in the intermediate grades--students who have a hard time in school because they don't read very well. The group was presumed to include a whole range of "problem students"--the mildly retarded or learning disabled, the "six-hour retarded," the alienated, the disadvantaged, the unassimilated--we have pigeonholes with labels for all of them. What do you do for kids like these? Well, you make up a reading program and give them good stuff to read, of course.

Ah! But it's not that simple! Here's what you have to contend with:

1. at least two schools of thought on every issue. With us it was modern psycholinguistic theory in one corner and special education practice in the opposite one;
2. a nagging awareness that the "reading problem" of many youngsters isn't just an inability to recode but rather the fact that they're not at home in English--especially school English; they don't have the meaning to bring to the written page;
3. constant reminders that "language skills" doesn't equal reading--that your program has to have everything in it; and that
4. it can't be just for slow learners--everybody needs to learn how to use language with more fluency, precision, grace, and flair.

Well, of course! You knew that all the time! But your federal money wasn't all that much, and besides, it was supposed to be spent in meeting some "critical national need," and the squares X'd in on your original application were "Reading" and "The Disadvantaged," with 15 per cent of the funds being reserved for meeting the needs of the handicapped.

But, having gone to Sunday School, where you developed a social conscience and learned to live by the work ethic, you try to do it all--and you bite off more than you can chew. Several years later you wonder why you're always behind schedule!

This may all sound trivial and flippant, but it isn't. The job is huge! Get a load of this.

The job: to design, develop, test, evaluate, revise, and ready for production a languaging curriculum which accounts for

1. the nature of language--a dynamic and intricate system made up of three interlocking sybsystems: phonological/graphological, semantic, and syntactic;

2. the nature of your clientele--pupils in grades 7 to 10 who have no fluency, a little fluency, or a lot of fluency in English; pupils who are barely literate, fairly literate, and very literate; pupils who do not learn easily, run-of-the-mill pupils, and quick pupils;

3. the dimensions of the language territory along these axes:

Skills--receiving, processing, and producing language
Codes--oral and written
Kinds of mastery--from accuracy and fluency to versatility and artistry
Elements--from letters and words to whole discourses
Styles--from the private/idiosyncratic to the close/informal to the public/formal
Levels of abstraction--from the highly concrete and particular to the very general or abstract
Aims--from self-expression, information giving, and persuasion to literary or artistic expression.

And in addition there are various formats and all kinds of subjects in which language is used.

4. Then you have to think, of course, about what schools are able to provide in the way of spaces, times, and people to implement your grand design when it finally evolves. Oh yes! And money. You have to worry about making your curriculum affordable, because if nobody can buy it, it's not going to help anyone.

In the light of all these considerations, you think about strategy and tactics--your ideas about instructional styles in language that you think will be most fruitful for your kinds of students. I put together an inventory of these in the summer of 1973--ten of them. Here they are. As teachers, students, designers, writers, theoreticians, you may find them interesting--or curious.

1. The osmosis school, which maintains that a child, if he or she is immersed in a language-rich environment, will pick up ability in languaging, so all you really have to do is arrange lots of opportunities for students to talk, read, act, write, play games, and do projects in school, and all will be well.

2. The developmental school, which posits a natural sequence of language growth paralleling physical and cognitive development. Developmentalists hold that all will happen in due time, willy-nilly, when the child reaches the proper stage of development, and until then there's not much use in trying because the child won't learn it anyway.

3. The disciplined inquiry school, which holds that language is taught best through engagement in intellectual tasks of progressive difficulty and complexity in the various disciplines of knowledge, not in a class called "language arts" or "English." "Every teacher an English teacher" is their

motto.

4. The futuristic school, which would have us look ahead and make some educated guesses about the intellectual, vocational, personal, and social prospects of our students and then tailor their language instruction to anticipated--and rather utilitarian--needs.

5. The hot topic school, which is promoted particularly by people who consider motivation and "relevance" essential preconditions to engagement in languaging activities. An assumption is made about topics students are "really interested in," and then pursuit of these topics is heavily laced with reading, rapping, and writing.

6. The principle-to-practice school, which holds that the study of principles--from grammar, semantics, logic, and rhetoric--can do a good deal to improve language facility by making students aware of how language works, thus enabling them to understand it better and frame their own messages better.

7. The more-makes-better school, which holds that there is no transfer--that knowing about language has no effect on language use and that the only way to learn to read, speak, or write better is by reading, speaking, or writing more. People in this group assume that giving lots of language assignments or providing lots of "occasions" will do the job.

8. The stack-the-deck-and-teach school, which is more systematic than the more-makes-better school. People in this group put students through sequences of progressively difficult languaging tasks, with models, instruction, and feedback informed by knowledge from grammar, semantics, logic, or rhetoric.

9. The diagnostic-prescriptive school, which tries to "pinpoint" what is missing or faulty in language performance, then tries to treat the "deficit" by carefully targeted exercises which "zero in" on the weak points.

10. The one-step-at-a-time school, or the task-analysis school, which

states a learning goal, then analyzes it and lays out a series of steps by which a pupil can move systematically "up the ladder" from where he or she is to where he or she needs to get. The pupil learns a, then b, then puts a and b together. Next c is added to ab, d to abc, and so on.

Where your curriculum comes out, of course, is as an eclectic blend of theory, analysis, experience, hunch, personal taste--and finally, trial and error. Theory is essential--I learned that from my mentors Arthur R. King and John A. Brownell, who wrote a fine book on curriculum practice ten years ago. Without theory you don't know what to include, what to leave out, and how to do what you decide to include. But I have also learned that theory rigidly adhered to and untempered by blows from other hammers, trials in other fires, hardens. Eventually you find yourself locked into an ideological bind you can't get out of, no matter what.

Well, where did we come out? We consulted our gurus in many fields--linguists old and new and psycholinguists; psychologists with ideas about language, learning, and thinking; sociologists interested in the role of language in social groups; educators in the fields of general curriculum, English, the teaching of languages, the teaching of reading, and the problems of teaching children with mental handicaps; semanticists and rhetoricians who have made some sense of the area of language use--or pragmatics.

We finally--after a long time--firmed up some ideas about the strategy, the content, and the design of our curriculum.

1. On strategy, here's where we came out in our consideration of the ten schools of thought on language teaching. We are grateful for all that is learned by osmosis or comes naturally in the course of development. We think that more languaging mileage could--and should--be gotten out of engagement

with the disciplines of knowledge. We shy away from hot topics, partly because they may not be hot tomorrow or next year, mostly because we think the important should be made attractive rather than vice versa. Relating to anticipated future "needs" (intellectual, vocational, personal, and social) seems a useful way of getting at the kinds of languaging that may be presumed essential. Providing occasions or making assignments seems less than satisfactory, since it does not give much help to the youngster who cannot do the work because he or she does not know how.

Courses or sequences in linguistics or grammar, semantics, logic, and rhetoric seem worthy; they have a valid place in the liberal curriculum. Certainly principles derived from them may serve the developer and teacher as organizational and criterial frameworks for language-in-use.

The diagnostic-prescriptive and task-analysis approaches seemed to us to have merit for helping youngsters whose language-poor environment, defective wiring system, or inadequate mental equipment has inhibited learning by osmosis, in the course of normal development, or through engagement in inquiry.

We found the notion of learning by producing a systematically sequenced series of language products in a workshop environment, with models, instruction, interaction, and feedback built in, a very appealing stratagem. Simulating roles which require using a variety of language styles, formats, and logics of general applicability seemed to us to supply coherence and "point" to important kinds of language tasks.

By making these choices we actually sidestepped the impasse between the psycholinguistically oriented and the special-education-oriented people on our team: we went both ways. We decided to have a Skills Lab using an incremental or part-to-whole approach and a Skills Workshop using a whole-to-part approach.

For our slow learners in the Skills Lab we have used task analysis and diagnostic-prescriptive strategies.

2. On content, we felt we had to deal with the phonological/graphological, semantic, and syntactic systems of English. We added the logical and rhetorical (or pragmatic) aspects to our list because we considered the orderly arrangement of ideas and the adjustment of style to aim, audience, and occasion to be essential aspects of good language use. We also thought it was worth zeroing in at different times on spellings, on words, on sentences, on paragraphs and passages, and on a variety of discourse types. Just as a knitter may concentrate variously on yarns, knit and purl stitches, ribs, diamonds, and cables, larger motifs of these, and on overall design--the pleasingness and utility of a knitted garment or afghan--we concluded that the language user could cultivate and refine his or her sensitivities by attending to the use of language elements and their combinations into larger motifs, patterns, and purposeful products.

3. On design, we settled on some principles. First, since language is a dynamic system--a clockwork of moving parts--our languaging units had to require students to do things with language--take it apart, put it together, move it around, play with it. Just looking at elements and patterns is not enough. Students need to sort, choose, and arrange elements; transform, combine, and string together structures; put patterns together into whole language products of their own. Second, since language is a symbolic system--that is, a conveyor of meaning--mechanics should be tied to meaning at the earliest possible moment. Thus, in our literacy program, the transcoding of spelling patterns into sound patterns and vice versa is always followed by reading and spelling in the context of narratives. Third, the rhythm of

instruction should be from receptive to productive and from oral to written. Whenever possible, students should work at comprehending, manipulating, and generating vocal signals or messages, then written signals or messages. Fourth, the direction of instruction should be from accuracy and fluency to versatility and artistry--from basic maneuvers to fancy maneuvers. (You really do have to be able to walk and run pretty well before you can do ballet!) Fifth, since language is a social medium, social interaction should be built into all tasks at appropriate points. Even in our diagnostic-prescriptive units, which have a high degree of individualization, working with a peer is part of the game.

So how has the HEP-Secondary Language Skills program finally shaped up? Well, as I said, we have two subprograms--the Skills Lab and the Skills Workshop. In Lab units, students work at building up their stock of language options; in Workshop units they work at developing a sense of how to use these options in languaging with an aim. The Skills Lab concentrates on the phonological/graphological, semantic, syntactic, and logical aspects of languaging. The Workshops put it all together and add the pragmatic element--making your language do what you want it to do.

The Skills Lab has the following units whose purpose is to help kids do neat things with language--in speaking, understanding, reading, writing, and thinking, which is indigenous to all the others.

Coding I and II
Word Craft I and II
Sentence Craft I and II
Passage Craft I and II
The Reader's Collection and Study Guides
Library Skills and Study Skills

The Coding units deal with transcoding from print to speech and vice versa--that is, with reading and spelling. The Word Craft units deal with the uses

and meanings of words. The Sentence Craft units deal with practical syntax--the use of more varied sentence patterns in composing. The Passage Craft units focus on understanding and using logical sequences of ideas in paragraphs and passages. The I series is for less fluent and literate students, the II series for the more articulate. The Reader's Collection is a classroom set of about 270 paperback books at three levels of reading difficulty from grade 2 up and in ten categories of interest. From each of the three levels four good books have been selected and little Study Guides have been written to get poorer readers into books and help them follow the drift or get the point of what they are reading. The Library Skills and Study Skills units are how-to units which teach techniques for finding, digesting, recording, remembering, and regurgitating information in a more or less systematic fashion--nothing profound, but certainly serviceable for students who don't know their way around a library or stumble through reading and reporting jobs.

In practice thus far, Coding I, the Reader's Collection, the Study Guides, and Word Craft I have gone together in a lab setting with individualized programming to accommodate regular students and special students together--part of our attempt to provide for the mainstreaming of mildly handicapped youngsters. The other units have been used primarily in more conventional classes. They don't necessarily have to be used that way: we have tried to make all our units amenable to individual, small-group, or large-group arrangements. Other possibilities are open--for example, a reading lab and a writing lab, each with a mix of less able and more able students.

Now I'd like to tell you a little more about just a couple of the Skills Lab units that you might find interesting. Coding I, our literacy program, uses diagnostic-prescriptive techniques. A set of criterion-referenced checks

in silent reading, spelling, oral reading, and reading of words in isolation is used to screen and program students and monitor their progress. The program goes from grade 1 to grade 8 levels in reading. There are 18 student handbooks with a total of 88 lessons, each lesson accompanied by a cassette tape which models the skill to be learned and tells the student what to do with his book and paper. Typically, the student sees spelling patterns in words, hears them, says them, listens to a generalization about the pattern, copies the words or supplies missing letters, practices the words in drills, reads them in stories especially written for Hawaii's kids, and spells them from a spelling check in story form on Side 2 of the tape. The redundancy is intentional: for retarded or learning-disabled youngsters especially, the see-hear-say-write-practice-read-spell sequence, using visual, aural, vocal, and motor aids to remembering, seems to help. Speed and accuracy criteria are used on the principle that understanding does not take place unless reading approximates speech. A student in Coding I at one of our trial sites told his teacher, "Gee, Mrs. Whitfield, now I can read as fast as I talk and I can understand it!"

The Reader's Collection and Study Guides are usually used with Coding I, so that a student, during the course of a week, will spend some time on reading practices, some on spelling, some on a book and Study Guide selected by a small group, and some on free reading from the Collection. (By the way, a fantastic amount of effort has gone into locating and selecting books for this Collection. We wanted interest, quality, and fair representation of the sexes and ethnic groups--and these are hard to find, especially at the lowest reading levels.) Some students--those with a very limited command of English--may be working on Word Craft I instead of something else. And some students may be doing a little Sentence Craft I. It all depends on what combination

seems right for each student.

The Sentence Craft units are kind of fun. Their purpose is to develop versatility in the use of sentences, mostly in description and narration, using the technique of combining kernel sentences pioneered by some linguists a number of years ago. It's a clever way to get kids into writing--first controlled writing, then free writing following the models. You know how some kids string all their sentences together with and then? Sentence Craft gets them to try other ways and talk about which ways "sound best." It also removes the initial hurdle of thinking of something to write about. Here's a sample.

MYNAH BIRDS

There are many kinds of birds.
1 These birds live in Hawaii.
The most common is the mynah bird. (but)

The mynah is a bird.
The bird is medium-sized.
2 The bird is dark grey.
The bird has white feathers.
The white feathers are on its wings.

The mynah has a favorite place.
3 The place is in the banyan tree.
The place is to sit and chatter.

Sometimes there are thousands of mynah birds.
They are sitting in the banyan trees.
The banyan trees are large.
4 The birds are eating berries.
The birds are talking.
The talking is loud.

The noise builds up.
5 This is when evening comes.
This is when the mynahs are eating their supper.

The sun sets. (When)
It gets dark.
The mynahs begin to quiet down.
6 They get ready to sleep.
They sleep all night.
They sleep in the banyan trees.

The Passage Craft units stress comprehension and use of some of the structures and logics used in description, narration, and exposition. They take up spatial order and spatial directions, time order, process, enumeration, cause and effect, classification, definition, comparison, and contrast--but under captions like Telling Where, Telling How to, Telling Why, Telling What a Word Means, and so on. The sequence is from comprehending model passages to manipulating supplied parts to providing missing parts to original writing. The Passage Craft units stress the use of connectors as signals of logical patterns.

Now--a little about the Workshop units. For these we stole a page from James Moffett. In his book Teaching the Universe of Discourse, he describes the kind of workshop in which apprentice actors, dancers, and craftsmen learn their trades:

> The master sets the tasks (initially anyway), the apprentices present their productions to the group, and they all explore together the issues entailed by the tasks. The content is the students' productions and some brought in from the outside. The teacher's role is the natural one he has by virtue of being more experienced in the craft; he talks freely at times like any other member but does not feel obliged to preschedule what is to be talked about (his tasks may do this in a general way) or to center discussion around himself. He fosters cross-education among the students, and they focus on the tasks, not the teacher. Each learns both from garnering reactions to his own work and from reacting in turn to the work of others. All become highly involved in what the others are doing, not only because they are engaged in the same tasks, but more importantly, because they are a social unit that is allowed to be precisely that.

In our Workshops, we added some features of our own. We provided some additional economy of learning by the systematic sequencing of tasks (basic maneuvers before fancy maneuvers), providing models (people and products), and building in more regular feedback. The Workshop units vary in details from Moffett's model, but the general notions of apprenticeship, interaction, and feedback are maintained throughout.

From James Kinneavy's book A Theory of Discourse we got some ideas about

pragmatics--the fitting of language use to the language user's aim. Kinneavy has a neat little device for getting into the aims of languaging. In any communication act, he says, there are four essentials: the encoder or sender, the decoder or receiver, the signal or code, and the reality being communicated about. If the sender is the primary factor--you've got something you just have to get off your chest--the use is expressive. If your focus is on the receiver--you want the receiver to think or act or feel a certain way--the use is persuasive. If the reality is most important--you've got to report some information or think out some idea--the use is referential. But if doing artful things with the code itself--the language--is your aim, you have literature, including word play like jokes, puns, and puzzles, incidentally.

In the six Workshop units--Drama, Poetry, Games, Broadcasting, Newswriting, and Courtroom--students work together on such uses of language as these. Each Workshop culminates in some communal product--a radio play, an anthology of poems, a language game complete with directions, a mock trial. During the weeks leading up to the climax, students work on the skills that are going to be crucial in putting that final product or performance together so that it will achieve its aim and fit its audience.

So that's it--put into too many words that convey too little about how the units work with real kids in real classrooms with real teachers. There's a lot of material--but there has to be because there's a lot of variety in kids in grades 7 to 10, and there is infinite variety in language. We don't kid ourselves that we have any magic bullets. But if teachers and students find the units fruitful and interesting, and if they help students learn to play some fresh, new music on the marvelous symbolic instrument that we call language, we'll be pleased.